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## **Maricopa County Confirms First Human Case of West Nile Virus in the U.S. for 2008**

Phoenix (March 26, 2008) – The 2008 West Nile Virus season is off to a very early start here in Arizona. Today, the Maricopa County Department of Public Health and Arizona Department of Health Services confirmed that a Southeast Valley man in his 60's is Maricopa County's first human case of West Nile Virus (WNV) this season. The man has been released from a local Valley hospital and is currently recovering from the virus.

"We recognize that people's first question will be 'Why Maricopa County?' The quick answer is that West Nile Virus is now endemic in environments across the nation including Arizona. Because we have a warmer winter and earlier mosquito season than most, it makes sense that we see cases earlier," said Dr. Bob England, director of the Maricopa County Department of Public Health.

"Our first confirmed case so early in the season could mean a busier season than in past years," said John Power, director of Maricopa County Department of Environmental Services. "This case also serves as a reminder that it's that time again to take a look around your homes and make sure there is no standing water where mosquitoes can breed."

"It's crucial that people help us prevent the spread of the virus by reporting to our department any mosquito problems, green pools, or standing water, and by working with their neighbors to get rid of mosquito breeding areas on their property," added Power.

WNV is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. Approximately 20 percent of people infected with the virus will feel flu-like symptoms occurring three to 15 days after the mosquito bite.

Symptoms may include fever, headache, body aches, nausea, vomiting, swollen lymph glands, and skin rash on the chest, stomach and back. A small percentage of people who are infected with WNV will experience severe symptoms, such as meningitis, encephalitis, paralysis, and even death. People over the age of 50 are generally at a higher risk for severe symptoms. If a person thinks he or she has WNV symptoms, he or she should consult their health care provider.

Health officials say Valley residents should be aware that although the majority of people who become infected with the virus will show no symptoms at all, for a small percentage of people it can be serious or even fatal.

Residents are encouraged to mosquito-proof their home by taking the following precautions:

- Eliminate mosquito-breeding sites around your property. Drain standing water in potted plants, tires and other containers.
- Install or repair window and door screens to keep mosquitoes out of the home.
- Keep fountains, animal troughs and swimming pools properly operating and free from debris.

Eliminating stagnant water around your property will stop mosquitoes from breeding. However, it is very important to avoid all mosquito bites. Apply insect repellent as directed by the product's directions, wear long clothing, and avoid outdoor activity after dusk and before dawn when mosquitoes are most active.

This is the first laboratory confirmation of human cases of West Nile virus infection in Maricopa County this year. In 2007, Maricopa County reported 68 confirmed West Nile virus cases, and 4 deaths.

Maricopa County and the Arizona Department of Health Services continue to have an enhanced surveillance program, which includes sampling and testing of mosquitoes and dead birds, and evaluation of equine neurological illnesses and human cases of meningitis and encephalitis.

For more information on West Nile virus, public health assistance, as well as for WNV dead bird drop-off locations, to report green pools or file any mosquito related complaint, and for WNV materials or presentations for your group/organization, call (602) 506-0700 or visit [www.WestNileAZ.org](http://www.WestNileAZ.org) or [www.maricopa.gov/wnv](http://www.maricopa.gov/wnv).

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